

MEMORANDUM

July 2, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Historic District Commission

SUBJECT: **HDC2009-00456** 224 Elizabeth Avenue, Lincoln Park
Historic District Commission Recommendation

Recommendation by Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission (HDC) recommends that the property and house at 224 Elizabeth Avenue in Lincoln Park be designated as a local historic district through the City's Map Amendment process by re-zoning the property from R-60 to R-60 HD. Having been constructed first as a small grocery store and having been moved with community assistance to the current location and renovated to serve as a single-family residence in 1954, the HDC notes that it meets Criterion I-C: "Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities."

Evaluation of Historic Significance by the Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission (HDC) considered the proposed Evaluation of Historic Significance at its April 16, 2009 and May 21, 2009 meetings. The proposed historic district evaluation concerns a single-family residence in the R-60 zone in Lincoln Park. Evaluation of Historic Significance was brought to the HDC in response to the filing of a demolition permit by the owner on March 4, 2009, in accordance with Section 25.14.d.1.(c) of the Zoning Ordinance. The owner of the property is the adjacent property owner, Iglesia De Dios, at 600 Westmore Avenue. The owner anticipates construction of a new church at 600 Westmore Avenue that will require additional off-street parking, and had purchased the subject property with this in mind. The HDC received comments at both meetings from the planning staff, owner, and the public.

The HDC reviews staff research and recommendations, and conducts its evaluation according to the adopted Criteria for Historic Designation (see Attachment A). This review is restricted to historic consideration. The HDC does not consider building condition, costs for rehabilitation, or future proposed uses in their deliberation. Such issues would be considered at future dates by the Historic District Commission, the Planning Commission and/or the Mayor and Council.

Background

A significant amount of survey work, research and analysis was undertaken by the City of Rockville during the production of the *2007 Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan*. At that time, three distinct Periods Of Significance were identified, and the subject property falls into the Third Period of Significance (1949 – 1970). This begins with the annexation of Lincoln Park into the City of Rockville from Montgomery County, and concludes with the end of de facto segregation. Commissioner McCool noted that the mid-20th century history of the property extended into the Period of Significance for Lincoln Park.

Discussion by the Historic District Commission

April 16, 2009: Staff noted that the building is considered a Contributing Resource in the Lincoln Park Conservation District, but the Evaluation for Historic Significance stands apart from that. Staff noted the development history, as traced through deed research. In staff's estimation, this is a vernacular mid-20th century structure that has been altered and lacks integrity. Ms. Anita Summerour testified that the building had been moved to this site. She said she did not want to see a parking lot here instead of the private home. Pastor Rodriguez spoke of the Church's plans to expand, with added parking requirements. The HDC talked about the criteria, that the property may meet I-C (cultural/historical heritage) or I-D (has value as part of the development/heritage). The deed research showed some association with persons significant to the history of Lincoln Park and Rockville, and the HDC asked staff to do further research and postponed a decision.

May 21, 2009: The HDC heard a brief staff report that addressed issues raised at the April 16, 2009 meeting. Staff noted that the history of the building, and its evolution from a small grocery store on Frederick Avenue to a modern mid-20th century residence on Elizabeth Avenue, was significant to the history of Lincoln Park and the community that lived here. Staff noted that the building did not meet the test for integrity in terms of the grocery store, as it had been significantly altered when it was modified to residential use. Staff also noted that Rupert Curry, and his wife Irene Snowden Curry, lived here and made a significant contribution to Rockville's history when he was elected to the Rockville City Council, being the first African-American to so serve. Mr. and Mrs. Curry, however, had already moved from this house when he ran for, and served in, public office. Therefore, the house did not hold an association with the significant historic event associated with the contribution of Mr. Curry.

The HDC discussed, however, that the property could qualify under Criterion I-C, because of its overall association with the cultural, economic, social, and political history of Lincoln Park during the years of segregation. Public speakers represented that the property indicated a drive for high quality living standards at a time when there were so many restrictions put on the African-American population in Rockville. The Commission noted that public testimony indicated that community involvement was a significant factor in the successful re-location of the store building and its subsequent renovation for a single-family residence.

Historic District Commission motion

Therefore, on a motion by Commissioner Powell, seconded by Commissioner McCool and with Chair van Balgooy voting in favor, and with Commissioner Tucker voting against, the Historic District Commission recommended historic district designation of the property at 224 Elizabeth Avenue on the basis of Criterion I-C. [Commissioner Moloney had recused himself and was out of the room.]

Attachments: HDC Evaluation of Significance using the criteria for historic designation
Minutes – April 16, May 21, 2009 HDC meetings
Staff reports – April 16, May 21, 2009 HDC meetings

cc: Pastor Rodriguez, Iglesia De Dios
Planning Commission